



The UNION ECHO

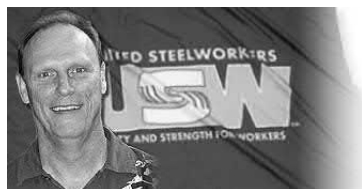
Serving the workers of Northern
and North-western Ontario



Volume 22 Issue 2

Unity and Strength for workers

Winter 2020



PRESIDENT'S CORNER PANDEMIC BRINGS A NEW SET OF RULES FOR DOING BUSINESS

Sisters and Brothers,

2020 has been very different for our Local Union, to say the least.

With the Covid-19 pandemic roaring all over the world and in our region, we had to take some actions in trying to control this virus and protect our members the best we could.

As early as March, we closed both offices, Thunder Bay and Kapuskasing. All representatives were directed to work from home. In Kapuskasing our Administrative Assistant was working from Monday to Thursday and if the reps had to go to the office to perform work that couldn't be done from home, they were asked to go to the office on the Fridays or in the evenings during the week. All of this to ensure the safety of our staff.

Not only that the offices were closed, but the reps had to manage their daily businesses differently. Instead of face to face meetings to address issues and grievances, which they were used to, they had to do those meetings virtually which is not the same as if it was a face to face meeting. We understand the members when they are saying that they

would prefer a face to face meeting instead of a virtual one, but we have to ensure the safety and well being of everyone.

Not only that we closed the offices, and went from face to face to virtual meetings, even arbitration hearings have to be done virtually, as arbitrators and counsels are protecting themselves and others from Covid-19, which is the right thing to do. These arbitration hearings have gone well as reported by the reps, but again, not the same as face to face ones.

Besides all above-mentioned matters, many conferences, conventions and meetings were cancelled, and this at all International, National, Districts, and Local levels of our Union. The International Convention was cancelled and rescheduled for 2022, the National Aboriginal Conference and the National Health and Safety conference were cancelled. The District 6 Women's conference was cancelled, and at the Local level, all Women, Stewards and Safety Council meetings were cancelled due to Covid-19.

Also at the Local level, our April Executive Board meeting was cancelled and the June

one was done virtually, which was good and went well. We did the September EBM face to face, with option of virtual Zoom meeting for those concerned about the face to face option. For this EBM meeting, we met at the Thunder Bay office, and all precautions were taken to ensure the Health and Safety of all Board members. The next EBM is scheduled to be held on December 17-18, and will be on the same terms as the September one.

In September, we did reopen both offices, but with procedures to follow while working and rules for visitors. Advise us of your visit so we can prepare, wash your hands when entering the office, face mask is mandatory, signing a presence sheet, and respect social distancing are some of the rules to be followed at the offices.

In October, even though there were not too many Covid cases in the regions where we are servicing members, we have witnessed our first Covid-19 case within our membership. One of our members contracted the virus. He was immediately sent home by the Company as soon as it was known that the member was sick. The Health Unit was immediately

contacted and asked to come and investigate the matter. After the investigation, it was determined that it was safe to continue operations, and that the situation would be monitored closely. In this case, by precautionary measure, two other employees were sent home and asked to quarantine. The Company did act very quickly and efficiently in this matter and we recognize their prompt and responsible action.

We all have to do our share in fighting this pandemic, that is why I am asking you to follow the rules, directives, wash your hands often, wear your mask, respect social distancing.

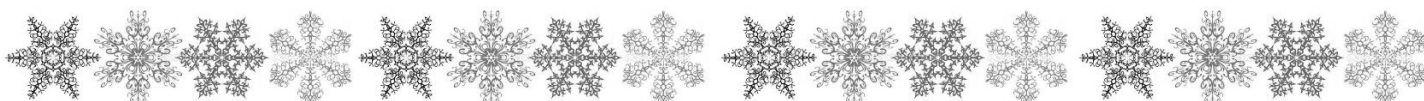
Let's hope that this situation is going to improve over time, and that we're going to be in a better place in 2021.

The Holiday season is right around the corner, enjoy your holidays!!!

I am wishing you all and your families all the best for 2021. Merry Christmas, Happy New Year!

STAY SAFE!!!!!!!

In Solidarity;
Jacques Jean





Good news to report regarding the Thunder Bay Casino

Early this October the casino announced its plans to reopen!

At the time of reopening, the Casino was only allowed 50 patrons on site at any given time. The hope is that the Conservative government will increase the number of patrons able to visit the casino when it is safe to do so.

The two casino units have called back 33 members. Unfortunately, Table games operations will likely take a longer period to return to operation. Gateway's restaurant did not reopen during the initial start up. The Food and Beverage department at the casino is the largest department and with government limitations on patrons, the company had deemed it not viable to open the restaurant under these conditions. It is expected that some members of that department will be called back soon as the casino intends to provide limited options of coffee and tea which will lead to the call back of some servers. The casino is also looking at options to provide a grab and go selection in the restaurant. If the company goes ahead with that scenario, we will have dishwashers and cooks recalled.

80% of the clerical unit has been recalled back to operation. The clerical unit at the casino conducts business in the back of the house.

Scheduling and auditing.

During the call back the Health and Safety committee played a crucial part in ensuring a safe environment to returning members. I would like to thank those committee members, as well as members who have returned. The due diligence of returning members not only helped keep the workers safe but the patrons safe as well!

Back in June a return to operations agreement was used to access the government's paid inactive duty program, AKA the Canadian Emergency Wage subsidy (CEWS). While securing payroll pay for the casino members who opted in, the union also secured benefit extensions for all members on furlough. Those health benefits remain in place at the time of my report. For those not familiar with the CEWS program it offers 75% up to \$837 weekly of payroll pay averaged over your remuneration totals from January 01, 2020 – March 15, 2020, start of the Pandemic! It is expected that the program will be extended, according to sources within government. We will likely see reductions in the program's allowable percentages, i.e. from 75% sliding to 55% and so on. The union continues to monitor the success of the program and continues to work diligently for the membership.

Resolute Ignace Sawmill

With softwood lumber prices at historic prices, we were

extremely hopeful that the Ignace sawmill would start-up.

The union has posed the question numerous times to Resolute asking "when will we see a restart"? Unfortunately, at the time of my report there have been no changes to Resolute's response regarding restart.

The community has gone without its sawmill's direct and indirect jobs for a year and a half. The shutdown of the Ignace sawmill also affects 12 mobile equipment operators who work for Dallan Forestry.

Nakina Sawmill

Nakina Lumber and USW Local 1-2010 are heading to arbitration on November 23rd, 2020, unless a settlement could be reached prior to that date, after middle ground had been lost. The Local filed a grievance last year regarding the company's wage proposals. Most of the wages and benefit levels were below the original agreement from 2007. The membership also wanted to see classifications moved up on the payscale and closer to industry standards, such as Heavy equipment operators, Debarker and Canter operators, as well as edger, stacker and trimline operators. I will have a full update in the summer Echo report.

Resolute Atikokan Sawmill

The final year of a lengthy agreement is finally here and almost finished. CBA expires

on December 31st, 2020. We have already begun to prepare for negotiations. Notice to bargain has been sent to the company and the bargaining committee is in place. There will be membership meetings in late November to receive the demands of the membership. Seeking improvements to wages and strengthening language will be best served by a strong show of solidarity from the entire membership.

Dallan Atikokan mobile equipment operators would also be affected by what is in the renewal of the collective agreement. Dallan members have a me-too letter that gives those members rights and privileges in accordance with the Resolute CBA. Therefore, it is important for those members to show their support and solidarity as we move towards bargaining.

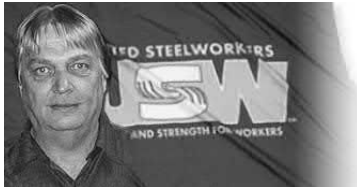
United we gain! Divided we beg!

This winter could prove to be an exceptionally long and arduous journey! Our mental health will be tested. If needing help please do not hesitate by calling Telehealth Ontario 1(866)797-0000 or Mental Health and addictions support at 1(866)531-2600.

To all my Brothers and Sisters, I wish you all a safe, healthy, fun filled winter and a joyful Christmas... Until next time, Take care and WORK SAFE!

In solidarity;
Jason Lacko





NEW POLICIES AND PRECAUTIONS IN PLACE AS BUSINESS CONTINUES

Greetings Brothers and Sisters,

I hope this finds you and your family safe and healthy.

Coronavirus continues to disrupt our lives. By continuing to follow the advice of medical and scientific professionals as best we can, we will get through this.

At work we need to follow workplace policies and best practices and continue to provide input on those policies for the safety and well being of all.

It seems to be more of a struggle each day, being separated from loved ones by circumstance and distance with no end in sight. It is difficult for myself and all others so affected. Hang in there!

Resolute FP Woodlands

The long-delayed jurisdiction arbitration reported in the past two issues of the Echo continues. It was to begin in April but instead began via Zoom in August. Potential settlements were discussed but not achieved. It was necessary to schedule more dates. Next available dates are

in August of 2021, another circumstance worsened by the epidemic.

The woodlands operations have continued with basically full employment for our members that work for various contractors, supplying Resolute's three operating sawmills and the pulp and paper operation.

Through the summer there have been some grievances and issues, with most being satisfactorily settled.

Wanson Lumber

Our members who work in the lumber yard loading and delivering building materials report a busy and challenging summer. Business was brisk as more people made home improvement and other building projects. The crew needed to be aware of and follow the established protocols and precautions as they dealt with the public, as well as ensuring the customers followed the policies as well.

Their collective agreement expired on February 28. Negotiations for a renewal of the agreement were delayed due to the pandemic. We did decide to go ahead with the

negotiations as the restrictions were eased somewhat in October.

We reached a memorandum of agreement which was ratified on October 21 by 77% of the membership. The three year contract includes an increase in the safety boot subsidy, a 2% retroactive wage increase in year one with another 3% over the term, pandemic premium pay of \$0.60 per hour for a six month period, improvements were made to the short term disability plan, chiropractic care, dental care plan and the pension plan.

Kiashke Zaaging Economic Development Corporation (KZEDC)

We have had no choice but go to the courts over the unpaid arbitration award from over a year ago. The award was a result of their failure to follow the terms of the collective agreement, pension and benefits were not being provided also the union dues were deducted by the employer from our members but were not forwarded to the Union.

It is unfortunate that we have been unable to establish and maintain a working relationship

at this operation. This has not benefited the corporation or its contractors. It continues to decline in size and production. This results in lost employment opportunities for the Gull Bay First Nation and other members.

We remain open and willing to find a resolution, but we need cooperation from the other side of the table. So far, they are unwilling or unable to see that fair and equal treatment of the workers would be a benefit to all, including their community.

I do take this opportunity to recognize and thank all of the hard-working stewards and committee members and all of those that support them. It is as a result of their efforts that we have unity and strength that is vital to the success of the local union. They make our achievements possible.

To the entire membership and your families, stay safe. Have the happiest Christmas season possible. May the New Year bring you good health, great happiness and prosperity.

In Solidarity;
Bruce Frost



UPCOMING NEGOTIATIONS WILL BE DIFFERENT WITH PANDEMIC

Since my last report of the Union Echo Summer 2020 edition, it has been challenging times. Since mid March to mid September, we have been working from home. Meetings have been

taking place via telephone conference or via video conference. Arbitration hearings have all taken place via Zoom and membership meetings were at a stand still.

Centre de Santé du Grand Sudbury and Rayonier Kapuskasing Office Workers

Fortunately, instead of getting laid off during this COVID-19 pandemic, some of the

membership from Centre de Santé in Sudbury and the members with the Office Workers at the Rayonier Kapuskasing Operation have been able to work from home.

...cont'd on page 4

Eric Carroll... from page 4

Ryam Kapuskasing and Opasatika Woodlands Operation

Both the woodlands' operation from Kapuskasing and Opasatika have been working during the COVID-19 pandemic. With social distancing, the cleaning of hands and the wearing of masks, as recommended by the Health Unit, the operations have been business as usual. The membership in these operations like all of us have had to adapt to these difficult times caused by this pandemic and have done a great job in staying safe. Luckily, we have had no reports of any cases in these operations.

Ryam Cochrane, Ryam Chapleau, EACOM Timmins and EACOM Gogama Sawmills

Once the sawmill industry was considered an essential service, the lumber markets

went to an all time high. Our members from the Ryam Cochrane, Ryam Chapleau, EACOM Gogama and EACOM Timmins sawmill have all been hard at work during this COVID-19 pandemic. And some members have benefited from this. The membership from the Ryam sawmill operations in Chapleau and Cochrane were each offered a \$15 per hour premium over and above the overtime premium negotiated in the Collective Agreement. This premium was offered to encourage members to work more overtime so that the sawmill can keep up to the demand.

Three Nations Logging

We began negotiations on September 14th with Three Nations Logging in Cochrane. We then met again October 21st, 22nd and 23rd and once again on November 4th where we were able to come to a

tentative agreement for the renewal of their Collective Agreement. On November 15th, the membership ratified the new collective agreement. This is a 2-year agreement with an increase of 2% for each year of the agreement and a wage adjustment of \$1.00 per hour at date of ratification. It also includes increases in some benefits, plus the addition of Family Day.

Maison Arc-En-Ciel

As for the folks working at Maison Arc-En-Ciel in Opasatika, they are all waiting patiently for us to negotiate for them a new Collective Agreement. Unfortunately, because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the closure of the operation, and the change in management, negotiations are on hold. We plan on meeting in the next coming weeks.

Upcoming Negotiations

And as most of you are aware, many of your Collective Agreements are up for renewal in the new year. We will be looking at holding membership meetings to get ready for upcoming negotiations. That means we will have to elect committee members and take demands, understanding that this COVID-19 pandemic might make it very challenging to hold these meetings. We will need to get creative on how we take demands and elect committee members. I will be in contact with my stewards that are up for negotiations in the new year on how we will be handling all this.

Wishing everyone a Safe and Happy Holiday. Merry Christmas. And let's hope that 2021 is a better year than 2020 was.

In Solidarity;
Eric Carroll



NEW AGREEMENT, GRIEVANCES AND OTHER ISSUES

Hello Brothers and Sisters, I would like to take this moment to wish you Happy Holidays, to you and your family. These holidays will be very different from what we are used to with this COVID-19 still around, which will prevent some of us to be reunited with our loved ones. We need to keep being strong and careful with this second wave coming around. We have to keep respecting social distance, wearing masks when needed and washing our hands regularly.

Columbia Forest Products

I would like to take this time and congratulate Pierre Breau as the new shop steward. We

are currently in arbitration regarding the lay-offs as we need more dates to settle this case.

Maison Renaissance

We reached a new collective agreement of 3 years. The negotiations were held from the 13th to the 15th of July 2020. A vote for the ratification was done on the 3rd of August and was accepted. The members received raises and salary adjustment and also some increases in the benefits.

Hornepayne Lumber

Looks like Hornepayne Lumber is doing very well as

the markets for lumber is pretty good at this time. We were also able to bring back to work 2 employees. These are two of the biggest issues that were brought to my attention. The first one is that we have verbal harassment going on in that place and I encourage employees to bring this forward so we can deal with them and stop this behavior from the culprit. The second one is that absenteeism is very high and we need to show up at work as this behavior affects all employees' moral and the company's profitability. This is a behavior that can be resolved as easily as just showing up to work.

Ryam Hearst Sawmill

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Eric Morissette on being the new shop steward and also Martin Plamondon on being on the grievance committee. We filed a few grievances regarding the training not being done after a successful application. We find this not acceptable. We understand that the training could take a few weeks to be done but not months; that is unacceptable as some employees lost money regarding this company behavior. We filed a grievance as the company decided not to give one member his successful applications and let

...cont'd on page 5



Guy Veilleux... from page 4

contractors perform that duty. We also filed another grievance as a successful applicant got the job, needs no training and was never sent on his new application. We find this situation not acceptable.

Lecours Lumber Woodlands

We filed a grievance regarding work permits not being paid, one on supervisor performing

union members' duties and also one regarding job posting.

Hearst CO-OP

We signed a letter of understanding that will create a new post with a new wage and also we have reached a wage increase for the current employees in place only, as the new employee will follow the current collective

agreement.

Hearst Community Living

They are due for a new collective agreement. The demands will come shortly and also we are trying to reach dates to start the negotiations.

Again, I would like to wish everyone a Happy and Safe Holiday Season. Brothers and

Sisters, we are still facing challenges as this pandemic around the world is still with us. We will need to find ways to work with the COVID-19 until a cure is found. Brothers and Sisters, together we will find strength and solidarity to fight this pandemic and win over it.

In solidarity;
Guy Veilleux



The Women of Steel Program Today

Who are Women of Steel?

Women of Steel are as diverse as Canada's population. We are young, middle-aged, and older. We are straight, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender. We are First Nations, Metis, and Inuit, or more recently arrived in Canada, from all cultural backgrounds.

One thing is for sure: we are a growing segment of our union. As USW organizes more workplaces, more women join our union and become Women of Steel.

Women work because we need to support ourselves and our families. Women of Steel are in all economic sectors where our union represents members.

Role of women and women's committees in USW

This is our Union! There are lots of ways women can play a role in our union, some of them – like being steward – are of long standing. Or you could create a new role based on the needs of your local membership or in your community.

USW encourages women members to be leaders within the local union, as a way to make the local and our union stronger. You can be active in any elected or volunteer role.

One – but not the only – way that women take a leadership role in USW is through the local's women's committee. Here are some of the things that a local women's committee can do:

- Connect with and be representative of the diverse women in the local
- Provide a safe environment for women to

discuss current workplace, community or personal issues and strategies for change

- Mobilize and educate women on their rights in the workplace and how to participate in the local

- Educated and work with the men in our locals, so they will be good allies in advancing equality

- Work with the Executive and other local committees on issues for women in your local

- Research and advocate for collective bargaining provisions that advance women's rights in the workplace

- Support lobbying efforts for legislative change. Connect the issues important to women in your local to USW national and district campaigns

- Act as mentors to young and newly emerging women leaders

- Organize educational events and social events for/with women in the local and with community

- Assist with planning and organization of conferences and local schools to ensure the content, speakers and participants reflect the diversity of the union's membership

- Identify and pursue women's training needs to ensure union courses and programs are accessible and available.

I want to get involved! Who do I contact?

If you are interested, please contact your Union Representative



Every year, we give two Scholarships of \$1,000.00 each. Winners are chosen based on an essay titled "The Value of Unions in our Society". All essays are sent to 3 judges with only a number; no names are shown. This year, our judges were Jeff Bromley (USW Wood Council Chair), Roland Laurin, (retired Local 1-2010 union representative) and Guy Bourgouin (former Local 1-2010 President). Congratulations to our two winners this year: Alanna Raynak and Isabella Downton. Below are their winning essays.



Alanna Raynak, daughter of Rob Raynak, member at Dallan Fort William

The Importance of Unions in our Society

Nearly 30% of Canadians belong to unions. That equals to approximately 4 million people, however, unions often go unrecognized for their many important roles within society. Unions in Canada are regulated by federal as well as provincial legislation. They assist workers in obtaining a decent wage so they and their families can enjoy a quality standard of living and financial security. Unions help workers achieve workplace benefits over and above legislative benefits and universal public programs. Vacations, extra medical insurance, disability/life insurance and a retirement income are all areas where unions have negotiated enhanced provisions. All unions provide workers with reliable job security and thus economic security for themselves, their

families and their communities.

Without unions, individuals would suffer in the workplace due to the lack of resistance from the working class. Within Canada our labour movement has a long history due to the dedication of improving workers daily lives. Over a century ago, in 1872, working individuals were on a 10 hour schedule per working day. The society came to a realization and discovered the unnecessary and unrealistic demand the workforce wanted. A union in Toronto at the time referred to as 'Toronto Typographical Union' which dealt with printers for local articles, raised attention to this ongoing problem and demanded for a nine hour work day. Employers refused, and the printers walked off the job on March 25, 1872. During that time, companies hired replacements, however, the strikers earned a great support system from local workers in Toronto. On April 15, 1872 a crowd which consisted of approximately 10,000 people held a rally at a local park to show their support.

In the 18th century union activity could be recognized as a criminal behaviour. George Brown was a Scottish-Canadian journalist, politician and one of the Fathers of Confederation which ordered the strike committee to be arrested. He stated the arrest was for criminal conspiracy.

This did not stop the community from protesting. On April 18, 1872 John A. Macdonald, the prime minister of Canada, introduced the Trade Union act. This act was known for protecting and legalizing unions. Due to the issue of shorter work weeks, the 'nine-hour movement' convinced workers joining unions would change lives for the better.

Employees did not stop fighting for their right just then. This continued to the year 1919 when soldiers returned home after World War 1 to find high unemployment rates and inflation. Each soldier was not able to get their job back after fighting for their country. Not only did this bring anger to the individuals and the community, this marked the largest general strike Canada has ever seen. On May 15, 1919, the society decided to show support to those soldiers who were incapable of receiving their job back. At exactly 11am workers had a walk out, leaving their jobs and duties unattended. Strikers took over the streets of Winnipeg. This ranged from garbage men to police officers, everyone had shown support. On June 21, 1919, the Royal North-West Mounted Police had hired union busters, who rode on horses to fire into a crowd of thousands of workers, killing two and injuring countless others. This marked the last day of the strike.

Still fighting for appropriate measures, a major history event led unions to great measures today. This includes the 'Right to safety at work'. During the 1960's the exploitation of workers was still widespread. Oftentimes this affected the immigrants more as many barely earned reliable support. Support is essential to care for your family, to have a safe work environment and for the immigrants to not live with fear that they will be deported.

The individuals who spoke little to no English had the most disrespect as they were unclear of any rights they had. On March 17, 1960, five Italian immigrant workers climbed 35 feet underground to continue their work on a tunnel at Hogg's Hollow in Toronto. The tunnel consisted of just six feet in width. Pasquale Allegrezza, Giovanni Battista Carriglio, Giovanni Fusillo, Alessandro and Guido Mantella had to crawl underneath a 36 inch water main running through it to pass one another. They hadn't been equipped with hard hats or flashlights which led the scene to be extremely dangerous. Unfortunately, a fire had occurred and the five men became trapped. Each exit was blocked from smoldering cables. In a state of panic, rescue workers began to shut off the air to the tunnel. Having no air way allowed the tunnel to cave-in. The working men suffered from nitrogen exploding within

...cont'd on page 7

Scholarship... from page 6

their bloodstream. A sad and traumatic death for the workers as the mud around the tunnel buried them alive. They died of carbon monoxide poisoning and suffocation from inhaling smoke, sand and water. This raised a major deal for all workers alike making a stand for reliable safety procedures.

Moving ahead to the present year of 2020, unions are more reliable and important than ever. With the ongoing pandemic, better known as covid-19, spreading across

society, workers are relying under the supervision of unions for stable support, financial needs and benefits. With unexpected new protocols, unions acted in a fast manner to protect their employees. For instance, in this difficult time unions called for increased inspection to ensure safe working conditions, proper guidelines, adequate sanitization and to ensure conditions met the occupational Health and Safety act. This would lead to a more approachable workplace. The steelworkers

unions was able to get appropriate 'personal protective equipment' for the steelworkers who work as airport screeners. Allowing proper equipment for safety measures increased the workers comfort and safety. Fighting for health and safety for the members who belong to united steel workers has been adapting and responding to provide full support for employees. Continuing to work on those who have suffered from employment loss due to the pandemic.

Unions are solidarity. They have faced tough, unfortunate and unexpected times before and will continue to remain strong today. In conclusion, it is hard to have a strong working middle class without unions. A long journey of dedication and reliance allowed workers today to have anti-discrimination rules, overtime pay, sick leave, pensions, collective bargaining rights for employees and countless other benefits. All of which are important and have improved our society.



Isabella Downton,
step-daughter of Calvin
Knorr, member at Jason
Rouillard Logging

The Value of Unions in our Society

Union is a word that you hear regularly. You hear it from your parents, from your teachers, and from the media. A union is an organized group of workers that come together to make decisions about the conditions in their workplace and affecting their work and efficiency. Oftentimes, the word union is used in a context that makes it out to be something bad. Unions are not necessarily a bad thing and

are generally a good thing that adds value to our society. Unions are valued in our society because they improve workplace policies, they increase income not just for union workers but also the entire middle class, and finally unions give blue collar workers a voice in the workplace.

The first reason that unions are valued in our society is because they improve workplace policies. Most unions are strong advocates for more expansive worker protections. Multiple decades ago, it was not uncommon for the average opinion of blue collar jobs to be low paying and unsustainable to support a family. Things have changed for blue collar workers in a good way thanks to unionization. These protections are vital for workers and their families to have a social safety net, fair paid leaves, and adequate regulations. Unionized workers are able to receive more generous and fair health

benefits than their nonunionized counterparts. Unionized workers also receive better pension plans and a raise in wage. These points are clearly great ways that unions are of value to society. Without unions, most blue collar workers would have an unfair pay, limited health care coverage, inadequate benefits, and a paltry pension.

The second reason that unions are valued in our society is because they increase wage for not only unionized workers but also the entire middle class. One of the main reasons that workers unionize is so that they can receive a pay raise. This is without a doubt a huge reason unions are so important. If workers did not receive a fair pay then this affects the way they live their everyday life, especially if they have a family to support. It is essential for workers to be able to support themselves and any dependants they may have, but a pay raise also greatly improves quality of life

and decreases any stresses the middle class might feel about money and payments.

The last reason that unions are valued in our society is because they give blue collar workers a voice in their workplace. It is vital, as a worker, to have your voice heard by your employer and have your needs met. Unions help to do exactly this. When workers' voices are heard and their requests are taken seriously, this improves efficiency in the workplace because workers will feel heard and appreciated. Companies can hold onto employees for a longer time because the employees feel valued.

In conclusion, unions are highly valued in our society because they improve workplace policies, increase pay, and make workers' voices heard. These help the middle class, blue collar workers, and their families and dependents.

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Health & Safety

Seeking help: It's not easy, but it's useful!

If we eliminate the context of COVID-19, we usually share easily that we caught a bad cold and it's taking us a long time to recover. But when we address a challenge with our mental health, we tend to want to hide it, we'll tend to blame it on a physical issue. Such as taking a sick day due to a cold, when in reality we've been feeling depressed for several days. Or our anxiety is overwhelming to a point where we have trouble functioning.

The reality is that we all occasionally go through challenges with our mental health. Just like being physically sick or injured; this is unavoidable. We have to remember that just like physical issues, treatments are available and these situations are generally temporary.

The main difference between the two is that, unlike a physical disease or injury, mental health challenges are often invisible. This lack of visual cues can make us feel as if we should be able to deal with this on our own.

Some could be saying: "Sometimes, I wish I had a cast around my head. At least that way, people would see that I'm truly suffering. They may then

have more compassion and be less judgmental."

We could compare a psychological injury, such as the emotional impacts of a sexual assault, to a deep cut. It is possible to treat such an injury by ourselves at home with bandages and ointments. But without professional help, there are more risks that the wound may become infected, would take more time to heal and leave a more prominent scar.

Seeking help is not always an easy task. For a deep cut, it means going to the hospital, waiting for someone to be available, get a shot and stitches. The process may be uncomfortable, even painful. But once we went through it, our injury will heal more quickly and the aftermath will be less prominent and agonizing. It's the same with seeking help for mental health.

Coming to the realization that we need help is not an easy thing. Calling a help line or going to see a therapist can be intimidating and even frightening. We don't know what to expect and we're worried about being judged. We often judge ourselves for not being able to manage the situation on our own. But we have to remember that we are often our

meanest and most severe critic. Would we say the same thing to a friend?

Talking about what is bothering us is like treating the wound. It can be incredibly useful, yet just as equally challenging. The strategies we will be asked to implement to manage what we are going through will require time, energy, as well as an open mind. We can compare this to physiotherapy: it's not always easy to find the motivation to do our exercises, but we notice that it accelerates and improves our healing process.

Although we can't promise that the process of seeking help will be easy, there is good chances that it will greatly reduce our period of suffering and prevent continuous impacts on our everyday life. Just like a physical injury sometimes leaves a scar, there is a risk that my psychological injury will leave a mark. But with help, there are better chances that this scar will be less painful and minimally apparent in the future.

I wish you all a very Merry X-mas and a Happy New Year as we are very much in need of a new one and get rid of 2020 and leave this awful year behind. Stay Safe!

In Solidarity;
Jacques Jean

